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M E S S I A H,



Advertisement.

IN reading several passages of the prophet Isaiah, which foretell the coming of Christ and the felicities attending it, I could not but observe a remarkable parity between many of the thoughts, and those in the *Pollio* of Virgil. This will not seem surprising, when we reflect, that the *Eclogue* was taken from a Sibylline prophecy on the same subject. One may judge that Virgil did not copy it line by line, but selected such ideas as best agreed with the nature of pastoral poetry, and disposed them in that manner which served most to beautify his piece. I have endeavoured the same in this imitation of him, though without admitting any thing of my own; since it was written with this particular view, that the reader, by comparing the several thoughts, might see how far the images and descriptions of the Prophet are superior to those of the Poet. But as I fear I have prejudiced them by my management, I shall subjoin the passages of Isaiah, and those of Virgil, under the same disadvantage of a literal translation.

POPE.



at Brindley.
M E S S I A H,

A

SACRED ECLOGUE,

In Imitation of

V I R G I L's P O L L I O.

By ALEXANDER POPE, Esq;



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M E S S I A H,

A

S A C R E D E C L O G U E.

E nymphs of *Solyma*! begin the song;
 Y To heav'nly themes sublimer strains belong.
 The mossy fountains, and the sylvan shades,
 The dreams of *Pindus* and the *Aonian* maids,
 Delight no more — O thou my voice inspire, 5
 Who touch'd *Isaiah*'s hallow'd lips with fire!

RAPT into future times, the Bard begun:
 A *Virgin* shall conceive, a *Virgin* bear a Son!
 From (a) *Jesse*'s root behold a branch arise,
 Whose sacred flow'r with fragrance fills the skies: 10
 Th' Æthereal spirit o'er its leaves shall move,
 And on its top descends the mystic Dove.

IMITATIONS.

VER. 8. *A Virgin shall conceive — All crimes shall cease, &c.*

VIRG. Ecl. iv. ver. 6.

Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;
 Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto.

(a) Isa. ix. 1.

6 M E S S I A H.

Ye (b) Heav'ns! from high the dewy nectar pour,
 And in soft silence shed the kindly show'r!
 The (c) sick and weak the healing plant shall aid, 15
 From storms a shelter, and from heat a shade.
 All crimes shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail;
 Returning (d) Justice lift aloft her scale;
 Peace o'er the world her olive wand extend,
 And white-rob'd innocence from heav'n descend. 20

REMARKS.

VER. 13. *Ye Heav'ns! from high the dewy nectar pour,
 And in soft silence shed the kindly show'r!*
 His Original says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above,
 "and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth
 "open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righte-
 "ousness spring up together."—This is a very noble de-
 scription of divine grace shed abroad in the hearts of the
 faithful under the Gospel dispensation. And the poet under-
 stood all its force as appears from the two lines preceding
 these, — *The Æthereal Spirit, &c.* The prophet describes
 this under the image of rain, which chiefly fits the first age
 of the Gospel: The poet, under the idea of dew, which ex-
 tends it to every age. And as it was his purpose it should be
 so understood, as appears from this expression of *soft silence*,
 which agrees with the *common*, not the extraordinary effusions
 of the Holy Spirit. The figurative term is wonderfully hap-
 py. He who would moralize the ancient Mythology in the
 manner of *Bacon*, must say, that by the poetical *nectar*, is
 meant theological grace.

VER. 17. *ancient fraud*] i. e. the fraud of the Serpent.

IMITATIONS.

*Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
 Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras——
 Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.*
 "Now the Virgin returns, now the kingdom of *Saturn*
 "returns, now a new progeny is sent down from high hea-
 "ven. By means of thee, whatever reliques of our crimes

(b) Isa. xlv. 8. (c) Chap. xxv. 4. (d) Chap. ix. 7.

Swift fly the years, and rise th' expected morn!

Oh spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born!

15 See Nature hastes her earlieſt wreaths to bring,

With all the incense of the breathing spring:

See (e) lofty *Lebanon* his head advance,

25

See nodding forests on the mountains dance,

See spicy clouds from lowly *Saron* rise,

20

And *Carmel's* flow'ry top perfumes the skies!

IMITATIONS.

" remain, shall be wiped away, and free the world from per-

" petual fears. He shall govern the earth in peace, with

" the virtues of his Father."

ISAIAH, Chap. vii. ver. 14. " Behold a Virgin shall

" conceive and bear a Son.—Chap. ix. ver. 6, 7. Unto

" us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; the Prince of

" Peace: of the increase of his government, and of his

" peace, there shall be no end: Upon the throne of *David*,

" and upon his kingdom, to order and establish it, with

" judgment, and with justice for ever and ever." P.

VER. 23. See *Nature hastes*, &c.]

VIRG. Ecl. iv. ver. 18.

At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu,

Errantes hederas passim cum baccare tellus,

Mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho—

Ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.

" For thee, O Child, shall the earth, without being til-

" led, produce her early offerings; winding ivy, mixed with

" *Baccar*, and *Colocasia* with smiling *Achanthus*. Thy cradle

" shall pour forth pleasing flowers about thee."

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxv. ver. 1. " The wilderness and the

" solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and

" blossom as the rose." Ch. lx. ver. 13. " The glory of

" *Lebanon* shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree,

" and the box together, to beautify the place of thy sanctu-

" ary." P.

(e) Isa. xxxv. 2.

8 MESSIAH.

Hark ! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers ;
 Prepare the (f) way ! a God, a God appears :
 A God, a God ! the vocal hills reply,
 The rocks proclaim th' approaching Deity.
 Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies !
 Sink down, ye mountains, and, ye vallies, rise ;
 With heads declin'd, ye cedars, homage pay ;
 Be smooth, ye rocks, ye rapid floods give way !
 The SAVIOUR comes ! by ancient bards foretold :
 Hear (g) him, ye deaf, and, all ye blind, behold !

30

35

IMITATIONS.

VER. 29. *Hark, a glad voice, &c*]

VIRG. Ecl. iv. 46.

Aggredere ó magnos, aderit jam tempus, honores,
 Cara deum soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum—
 Ipsi lætitia voces ad sydera jactant
 Intonsi montes, ipsæ jam carmina rupes,
 Ipsa sonant arbuta, Deus, deus ille Menalca!

Ecl. v. ver. 62.

“ Oh come and receive the mighty honours : the time
 “ draws nigh, O beloved offspring of the Gods, O great in-
 “ crease of *Jove* ! The uncultivated mountains send shouts
 “ of joy to the stars, the very rocks sing in verse, the very
 “ shrubs cry out, A God, a God ! ”

ISAIAH, Ch. xl. ver. 3, 4. “ The voice of him that
 “ crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord !
 “ make strait in the desert a high-way for our God ! Every
 “ valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall
 “ be made low, and the crooked shall be made strait, and
 “ the rough places plain. Ch. iv. ver. 23. “ Break forth
 “ into singing, ye mountains ! O forest, and every tree
 “ therein ! for the Lord hath redeemed *Israel*.” P.

(f) Isa. xl. 3, 4. (g) Chap. xliii. 18. xxxv. 5, 6.

M E S S I A H. 9

30 He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
 And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day. 40
 'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
 And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear:
 35 The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,
 And leap exulting like the bounding roe;
 No sigh, no murmur the wide world shall hear, 45
 From ev'ry face he wipes off ev'ry tear:
 In (*b*) adamant chains shall death be bound,
 And hell's grim tyrant feel th' eternal wound.
 As the good (*i*) shepherd tends his fleecy care,
 Seeks freshest pastures and the purest air, 50
 Explores the lost, the wand'ring sheep directs,
 By day o'ersees them, and by night protects,
 The tender lambs he raises in his arms,
 Feeds from his hand, and in his bosom warms;

REMARKS.

VER. 39. *He from thick films shall purge the visual ray.* The sense and language shew, that by *visual ray*, the poet meant the *sight*, or, as *Milton* calls it, indeed, something less boldly, *visual nerve*. And no critic would quarrel with the figure which calls the *instrument* of vision by the name of the *cause*. But though the term be just, nay noble, and even sublime, yet the expression of *thick films* is faulty, and he fell into it by a common neglect of the following rule of good writing, "That when a figurative word is used, whatsoever is predicated of it ought not only to agree in terms to the thing to which the figure is applied, but likewise to that from which the figure is taken." *Thick films* agree only with the thing to which it is applied, namely, to the *sight* or eye; and not to that from which it is taken, namely, a ray of *light* coming to the eye. He should have said *thick clouds*, which would have agreed with both. But these inaccuracies are not to be found in his later poems.

(*b*) Isa. xxv. 8. (*i*) Chap. xl. 11.

10 M E S S I A H.

Thus shall mankind his guardian care engage,
 The promis'd (*k*) father of the future age.
 No more shall (*l*) nation against nation rise,
 Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
 Nor fields with gleaming steel be cover'd o'er,
 The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more ;
 But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
 And the broad faulchion in a plow-share end.
 Then palaces shall rise ; the joyful (*m*) Son
 Shall finish what his short-liv'd Sire begun ;
 Their vines a shadow to their race shall yield,
 And the same hand that sow'd shall reap the field.
 The swain in barren (*n*) deserts with surprise
 See lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise,
 And starts amidst the thirsty wilds to hear
 New falls of water murm'ring in his ear :
 On rifted rocks, the dragon's late abodes,
 The green reed trembles, and the bulrush nods.

IMITATIONS.

VER. 67. *The swain in barren deserts, &c.*
 VIRG. Ecl. iv. ver. 28.

Molli paulatim flavescent campus arista
 Incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva,
 Et duræ quercus sudabunt roscida mella.

“ The fields shall grow yellow with ripened ears, and the
 “ red grape shall hang upon the wild brambles, and the
 “ hard oaks shall distil honey like dew.”

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxv. ver 7. “ The parched ground shall
 “ become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water : In
 “ the habitations where dragons lay, shall be grass, and reeds
 “ and rushes.” Ch. lv. ver. 13. “ Instead of the thorn
 “ shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall
 “ come up the myrtle-tree.” P.

(*k*) Isa. ix. 6. (*l*) Chap. ii. 4. (*m*) Chap. lxxv.
 21, 22. (*n*) Chap. xxxv. 1, 7.

M E S S I A H. 11

55 Waste sandy (o) valleys, once perplex'd with thorn,
 The spiry fir and shapely box adorn :
 To leafless shrubs the flow'ring palms succeed, 75
 And od'rous myrtle to the noisome weed.
 60 The (p) lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
 And boys on flow'ry banks the tyger lead !
 The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
 And harmless (q) serpents lick the pilgrim's feet. 80
 The smiling infant in his hand shall take
 65 The crested basilisk and speckled snake;
 Pleas'd, the green lustre of the scales survey,
 And with their forky tongue shall innocently play.
 Rise, crown'd with light, imperial (r) Salem, rise! 85
 Exalt thy tow'ry head, and lift thy eyes !

IMITATIONS.

VER. 77. *The lambs with wolves, &c.*]

VIRG. Ecl. iv. ver. 21.

Ipsæ laste domum referent distenta capellæ
 Ubers, nec magnos metuent armenta leones—
 Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni,
 Occidet.——

“ The goats shall bear to the fold their udders distended
 “ with milk : nor shall the herds be afraid of the greatest
 “ lions. The serpent shall die, and the herb that conceals
 “ poison shall die.”

ISAIAH, Ch. xi. ver. 16, &c. “ The wolf shall dwell
 “ with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the
 “ kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling to-
 “ gether : and a little child shall lead them.—— And the
 “ lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child
 “ shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child
 “ shall put his hand on the den of the cockatrice.” P.

VER. 85. *Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!*
 The thoughts of *Ijaiab*, which compose the latter part of

(o) Isa. xli. 19. and Chap. lv. 13. (p) Chap. xi. 6,
 7, 8. (q) Chap. lxxv. 25. (r) Chap. lx. 1.

12 MESSIAH.

See, a long (s) race thy spacious courts adorn;
 See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,
 In crowding ranks, on every side arise,
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
 See barb'rous (t) nations at thy gates attend,
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;
 See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate Kings,
 And heap'd with products of *Sabea* (v) springs!
 For thee *Idume*'s spicy forests blow,
 And seeds of gold in *Ophir*'s mountains glow.
 See heav'n its sparkling portals wide display,
 And break upon thee in a flood of day.
 No more the rising (w) Sun shall gild the morn,
 Nor ev'ning *Cynthia* fill her silver horn,
 But lost, dissolv'd in thy superior rays,
 One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze
 O'erflow thy courts: the LIGHT HIMSELF shall shine
 Reveal'd, and *God*'s eternal day be thine!
 The (x) seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
 But fix'd his word, his saving power remains,
 Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own MESSIAH reign

IMITATIONS.

The poem, are wonderfully elevated, and much above those general exclamations of *Virgil*, which make the loftiest parts of his *Pollio*.

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo!

—toto surget gens aurea mundo!

—incipient magni procedere menses!

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo! etc.

The reader needs only to turn to the passages of *Isaiab*, here cited. P.

(s) *Isa.* lx. 4. (t) *Ch.* lx. 3. (v) *Ch.* lx. 6. (w) *Ch.* lx. 19, 20. (x) *Ch.* li. 6. and *Ch.* liv. 10.

This is the end of the poem